

# Blockbuster videogame line-up to spark E3 magic

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Fair goes play games of manufacturer Ubisoft at the GC (Games Convention) fair for computer games and entertainment in Leipzig, Germany in 2008. Videogame makers are defying horrid economic times with an annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) brimming with blockbuster titles and unbridled pizzazz.

Videogame makers are defying horrid economic times with an annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) brimming with blockbuster titles and unbridled pizzazz.

The expo kicking off Tuesday in Los Angeles is expected to revive dazzle of years past and offer previews of hot videogames that will hit the market for the prime year-end holiday shopping season.

"We are starting to see an industry waking up to the fact that we've been

out of the limelight," said Scott Steinberg, publisher of DigitalTrends.com, a game and gadget website with 40 million readers.

"E3 is the public face of the industry. You will see all sorts of surprises. At this point, it is anyone's game."

Videogame sales grew through much of the financial crisis, but slid in March and April of this year, according to industry figures.

Analysts remain optimistic about videogames, citing surveys indicating players would rather cut back on other entertainment, such as movies or dining out.

Major videogame makers are playing it safe by rolling out sequels to hit franchises and freshening faded successes.

French videogame star [Ubisoft](#) will show off "Assassins Creed 2" and "Red Steel 2" along with the latest in a line of popular "Rabbids" titles featuring zany animated rabbits.

Ubisoft will also unveil videogames made from television game shows "Family Feud," "The Price Is Right" and "Press Your Luck" tailored for Nintendo's Wii consoles.

"(These) are some of the most popular game shows of all time," said Ubisoft senior vice president of sales and marketing Tony Key."

"These video games will appeal to all generations and make a great addition to family game night."

Eagerly-anticipated sequels to be touted at E3 include "Mass Effect 2," "Bioshock 2," "God of War 3," and a "Modern Warfare" title likely to be a powerhouse in the "Call of Duty" franchise."

"What we are seeing is a shift toward higher quality, risk-averse publishing," Steinberg said.

"Right now, if you are going to ask someone to pony-up 60 bucks for a title, even though you can argue they get 30 hours of game play, it has to be good."

Videogame makers are expected to continue a trend toward downloadable content (DLC) for titles as well as letting people play on the Internet as teammates or opponents.

"Online is a feature everyone is trying to exploit," said videogame analyst Mike Hickey of Janco Partners.

Microsoft Xbox, Sony PlayStation3, and Wii each offer arenas for online play.

"Publishers love it because they can capture an audience for a longer time, delay trade-ins and hold up pricing; then there is always the idea of micro transactions for downloadable content."

The makers of controversial but hot-selling "Grand Theft Auto" are to provide a look at DLC titled "The Ballad of Gay Tony." Bethesda Softworks will expand on DLC for its winning "Fallout 3" videogame.

Bethesda will also debut a "Brink" videogame that "does some really cool and innovative things for a shooter," according to studio marketing director Pete Hines.

Pressure is on Nintendo to deliver captivating titles for the Wii, which has been a sales sensation but could lose momentum in the absence of must-have new videogames to play on the consoles.

"Nintendo needs something; everyone is saying that," Hickey said.

A MotionPlus gadget that makes Wii motion-sensing remote controls more precise is to hit the market during E3, and videogame giant Electronic Arts will preview athlete-themed golf and tennis titles that work with the gizmos.

Sword action in Ubisoft's "Red Steel" is also tailored for MotionPlus.

The popularity of music-based videogames continues, with Harmonix and MTV rolling out a "Rock Band" title that "takes players on a journey through the legacy and evolution" of The Beatles.

Activision is to offer a glimpse of "DJ Hero," a "Guitar Hero" style videogame in which the virtual instruments are turntables.

Analysts are watching for price cuts or new videogame hardware. Sony is expected to introduce a next-generation PSP handheld videogame device to compete with Nintendo's freshly-launched DSi model.

Microsoft and Sony might ramp-up motion-sensing abilities of console controllers in the spirit of [Wii](#).

"We are going to see a little of the magic come back to E3," Steinberg said. "Games that really push the boundaries for high-definition audio/visual and really stretch."

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